

DCFS Weekly Update From the State Office

Friday, September 29, 2000

From My Perspective

By Ken Patterson

The Auditor General for the State of Utah is Mr. Wayne Welsh. Each year Mr. Welsh's office performs audits of agencies of Utah state government. Some audits are standard annual audits. Other are requested by legislators. The legislative Audit Committee approves audit requests and then hears the reports and recommendations from those audits.

In December of 1999 the auditors began a legislatively-requested audit of how well DCFS, the Attorney General's (AG's) Office, and the Juvenile Court were following the statutory timelines on adoption. They specifically looked at two statutory timelines: 1) limiting reunification services to 12 months, and 2) holding the Termination of Parental Rights hearing within 45 days of ending reunification services.

Their sample size was 17 cases (13 cases randomly selected and four cases referred through foster parents). They found that in 71 percent of the cases, one or both of the above-mentioned timeframes were missed. They gave some basic recommendations for correcting the time lags to DCFS/AG's Office and to the Administrative Office of the Courts.

Gratefully they included or referenced much of the federal data that I shared with you in August. Legislators will understand that although this sample did not look so great, when compared to other states we are a speeding bullet when it comes to adoption. The auditors also observed that we have significantly increased the speed of our adoptions since 1997, while doing a significantly greater number of adoptions. All in all it's not a bad report for us.

We will send you the full text of the report and my response (which is a formal part of the report) on Monday.

No sooner than this audit was completed than they began an audit on our adoption subsidy program. It is clear that the legislature wants as much information as possible as they go in to next January's session on the adoption subsidy issues. If you are contacted by these auditors regarding one of your cases or practices in your region, please be candid in your remarks.

I hope to see you at the Child Welfare Institute next week.

Practice Model Facilitators

By Richard Anderson

After returning from a time out working on the budget issues I found a renewed and enlarged appreciation for a group of people who work so hard to make our division more effective and our environment more supportive. Probably few individuals really understand the depth of commitment and the amount of hard work that is going on among people who are the facilitators of our practice model training. Each of these

facilitators spends a lot of extra time and energy in being trained on the practice model skills, providing rewrites on text for the training, preparing for regional training, delivering training that has been modified to meet regional timing and regional nuances, assisting supervisors in providing training to front-line staff, and providing consultation on the practice model, along with a whole bunch of other things too lengthy to mention here. Each time we meet it is apparent how much they have all of our best interests at heart. They are concerned about making sure the quality and content meet the needs of each person in his or her assignments in the division.

As you attend the sessions of practice model training, this might be a good opportunity to practice on the strength-based approach that we have been learning about. Let your facilitators know of your appreciation for the difficult task they have tackled. The facilitators are providing this kind of feedback to us about all of those who are participating in the training. It is great when we can thank each other for the added support that comes from those individuals willing to take on more work to improve the outcomes for children and families and to make our work more successful and increase our confidence on and off the job.

Just so you will know who these people are, here are the names of our facilitators (hope we got them all!):

Current Practice Model Facilitators

Cottonwood Region

Betty Owen
Kirk Read
Caryn Silberberg
Heber Tippetts
Patti VanWagoner
Steve Sorensen

Granite Region

Rock Boyer
J.J. Glazier
Roland Oliver
Kelly Powers
Jackie Webb

Salt Lake Region

Kate Jensen
Spence Morgan
Megan Wiesen

Western Region

Irl Carlson
Trish Coburn
Lynn Jacobson
Antonella Mirabella-Kelly
Bert Peterson
Brent Platt

Eastern Region

Greg Daniels
Dave Emmett
Carolyn Henry
Melissa Herrera
Phyllis Lee
Kevin Webb

Northern Region

Grant Bartholomew
Carol Baumann
Rich Jensen
Cindy Lundquist
Mike Pomeroy

Southwest Region

Cathy Edwards
Jerna Mitchell
Lori Orton

State Office

Midge Delavan
Reba Nissen
Linda Wininger

Past Practice Model Facilitators

Charlotte Gibbons (Salt Lake Region)
Gloria Jensen-Sutton (Northern Region)
Scott Langford (Southwest Region)
Troy Randall (Salt Lake Region)
Mick Woolsey (Southwest Region)

Now, another unsung group that I want to recognize is our supervisors. Supervisors are key facilitators of our practice model training. They will continue to be our most important facilitators. The supervisor is the link between the family and the practice model through the front-line staff. Our workers in the field will know practice and be reinforced in their practice by the supervisor. Any supervisor who feels the need for added support can ask for help from their region facilitators, region administration, or someone at the state office (Midge Delavan at 538-4404 or me at 538-4656). As the supervisor learns the skills of the practice model (or comes to know which skills they have that are emphasized in the practice model) and then promotes this practice through training and ongoing support to their staff, we will experience the real effects of a standard of practice across DCFS. Child welfare in Utah will be no better than the front-line practice that each of our workers understands and implements. The supervisor is key to the outcome.

To the front-line workers who are being asked to assure that you are aligning your practice with the practice model, we appreciate the important feedback you are giving us. We realize that you are getting a piece at a time. We appreciate your patience as you become reinforced as to the importance of consistent attention to each skill in the model. We bet you have become aware, as have we, that the philosophy and the practice are already showing up in our conversations and in the way we are working with children and families. You are all heroes in my book! Our great intentions are being backed up with sets of skills that will enable you to make the difference you came to this profession to make. Thanks for all of your hard work!

Certified Qualitative Case Reviewers—Addendum

By Caren J. Frost

In the Weekly Update of September 22, 2000, we included information on certified Qualitative Case Reviewers. Unfortunately, we inadvertently omitted three people from our list of certified reviewers, as follows:

Louise Brown
Cheryl Dalley
Linda Wininger

Our sincerest apology is extended to these esteemed individuals for not including them in our original article! Please contact either Laura Cameron or Aude Bermond-Hamlet with the Office of Services Review if you would like further information about becoming a certified Qualitative Case Reviewer.

Child Welfare Institute 2000

“A Sense of Becoming...our experience and expertise, our work and our vision”

By Midge Delavan

Our Child Welfare Institute next week holds many treasures. The greatest treasure is the opportunity for us to come together and process where we are as a learning organization. There is national news on CPS, MEPA, and Concurrent Planning. There is an opportunity to spend time with our training consultants from the Child Welfare Policy and Practice Group (Linda Bayless and Cornelius Bird), being trained firsthand on skills and issues related to the practice model. There are special awards for some special people. There is a chance to reflect on where we are as a state child welfare agency in a national context. There are state and national speakers offering the latest information in their fields. There is the opportunity to network and compare notes with other regions and with foster parents.

Our new substance abuse curriculum for child welfare will be piloted. This is an exciting workshop that uses the latest in substance abuse information put together for our use in child welfare. The technique of motivational interviewing, which fits well with the practice model, will be taught through video examples. Issues shared by substance abuse and child welfare professionals, working with substance abuse clients for positive child welfare outcomes, and understanding treatment issues and their impact on child welfare are included—come prepared to learn a lot!

You will find something important to discover in Foster Care, CPS, DV, In-Home, Adoptions, and Youth Services. You will find opportunities to share your “Professional Competence” with others.

Besides a “Utah morning” and complimentary lunch on Wednesday, you are invited to a town meeting with Utah Children on Tuesday evening at 7:00, a bookstore, and a video room.

Thanks to our partners in Mental Health, John VanDenBerg will be speaking to everyone on Thursday morning at 8:30 to describe “Wrap-Around Services.” This model of service, being adopted by Mental Health, shares goals and processes with the practice model. Hearing Dr. VanDenBerg will inspire us with a vision of where we are going in family, partner, and community teaming. Don’t miss this one.

Our gratitude to all the speakers is great. Our respect and gratitude for all the DCFS staff is unbounded. We hope this is a good gift of learning and sharing for us all.

When you come, be there for the continental breakfast that starts at 8:00 a.m. in the South Lobby. Tuesday and Thursday general sessions start at 8:30 a.m. in the ballroom. The Wednesday session starts at 9:00 a.m. in the ballroom.

Changes include:

- Michelle Gourley from NOJOS speaking on “Working with Sexually Reactive and Sexually Abusive Youth” on Tuesday morning instead of Thursday morning.

- There are a few places left in the Monday computer sessions on using Microsoft Word.
- There are also places for SAFE training at the computer center on Thursday at 10:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. The morning session is geared to technical use. The afternoon provides some very helpful insights on data generation and use for supervisors and others. The SAFE training has been moved from Wednesday to Thursday. Check in at the DCFS table in the South Lobby to get more information.

See you there!

Family-Centered Practice

By Richard Anderson

Family-centered practice operates on the premise that there is positive power in the family system. Families can best provide for children's safety, permanence, and well-being. Some may say, in jest, "Richard, what a profound statement!" Yet, in practice it is obvious that there are times when more faith is placed in institutions and temporary programs than in the investment into the family. Families can provide what children need the most—love, safety, trust, and respect—to name a few. A few examples of when practice does not reflect this basic belief in the power of families are 1) when removal of a child from a home is made without a search to see if the family system may be available to provide "home," 2) when in-home services are not providing ongoing effective functional assessments that include the family's view of themselves, 3) when parents with children in foster care are not receiving high levels of services and are not directly involved in decisions regarding their child, or 4) when foster parents (the temporary family system, in most instances) are not directly included in all phases of work with the child (after all, they have been asked to bring the power of the family to this child for a short time). Although most every family has the power to provide safety, permanence, and well-being, we find some families that may not have the ability, the resources, or the willingness to assure this for their children. When that happens, it is our obligation to ensure that the child has a family that will provide for their needs, either through removing the obstacles and improving family capacity or by obtaining a "new" family. Even when this type of move must be made, the "new" family is the locus for work with the child.

For some of you, the struggle between family-centered practice and child-centered practice may not have been evident in your time in child welfare. For some of us, the swinging back and forth from both positions has made us question why there was ever a dichotomy set up in the minds of some people. Both preserving families and protecting children are the responsibility of child welfare services. The enactment of the Adoption and Safe Families Act in 1997 made it clearer than ever that both of these objectives are to be accomplished. "Child and family services must be designed to ensure the safety and protection of children as well as the preservation and support of families...When safety can be ensured, strengthening and preserving families is seen as the best way to promote healthy development of children...family strengths are identified, enhanced, respected, and mobilized to help families solve problems." (45 CFR 1357)

Here is a quote from an article entitled, “Can We Put Clothes on This Emperor?” in the publication Best Practice, which is produced by the National Resource Center on Family-Centered Practice. I present this as a conceptual basis for a new era in family-centered practice. “There is a problem in thinking about family-centered practice as the fashionable ‘set of clothes’ that will win instant success for families. A family-centered perspective is a conceptual approach—a shift in the way we think about what is helpful for children and families in the child welfare system. It is not only a set of specific strategies or models (for example, family conferencing or family preservation) to use with families. Instead, **it is a framework based on the belief that the best way to protect children in the long run is to strengthen and support their families, whether it be nuclear, extended, foster care, or adoptive** [underline and bold added]. The idea of involving the family as a part of valid intervention in child welfare is still relatively new when compared to other, well-established modes of practice. Traditionally, child welfare efforts were child focused. They were intended to protect, provide care for, and plan for children who were separated from their parents.”

We need the power of the family at the table in all of our work. This means the family of origin for the child and family receiving in-home services and foster care with returning home as the goal, the foster family while the child is in care, and the adoptive family when we are involved in any work with the child.

A long-term view of our work will show that an investment in families and communities and more informal helping systems will provide a large scale positive change for children at risk and their families, which, in turn, can, with a voice of experience, infuse realistic supports as part of the communities and informal helping systems which they are part of. Back to the article, “Can We Put Clothes on This Emperor?” this type of work “...requires specialized knowledge and skills to build family capital—resources for strength and resilience.” This is what the practice model training is intended to bring to all of us.

(See the document entitled “Snapshot.doc” for a comparison of Family-Centered Child Welfare Services and Conventional Child Welfare Services).

Memo of Understanding with the Foster Care Citizen Review Board

By Carol Miller

In February 2000, a Memorandum of Understanding was finalized between DCFS and the Foster Care Citizen Review Board (FCCRB). Both agencies believe this Memorandum supports the goal of providing effective and efficient services delivery to children and families of Utah.

This Memorandum is divided into five sections: (1) Issues of General Application; (2) Before the Review; (3) At the Review; (4) After the Review; and (5) Title IV-E Reporting. The Memorandum clearly states, “DCFS and FCCRB acknowledge that there is a difference between case work and review.” The responsibility of the FCCRB reviewers is to *verify and assure*. This means they collect and analyze information, then

transmit their “findings and recommendations to case and system stakeholders, providing objective, comprehensive information about the status of children in care and strategies on how best to make case and system improvements.” Other areas of the Memorandum include the importance of cultural responsiveness, the necessity of confidentiality, the value of participation in reviews by all parties, and the usefulness of open communication at all levels of a case and between DCFS and the FCCRB.

An important impact of the Memorandum is the agreement to adhere to one review schedule statewide, which will be phased in over the next year beginning with children who entered care in March 2000. Children in DCFS custody will be reviewed according to the schedule outlined below until they are released from DCFS custody by the juvenile court or until their adoptions are finalized.

Return Home or Adoption Goals	Long-Term Foster Care Goals
# months in care	# months in care
4	4
10	10
15	18
21	30
27	42
33, etc.	54, etc.

Open dialogue among DCFS and the FCCRB is central to a constructive working relationship. We need to make sure that we exchange information, concerns, and ideas as needed. Your cooperation and hard work on these reviews is greatly appreciated. A copy of this Memorandum is available upon request by contacting Joelle Horel, DCFS Out-of-Home Care Specialist, at 538-4398 or by e-mail at JHOREL@hs.state.ut.us.

To Make Your Life Easier...Using SAFE Optimally

By Robert Lewis

In SCF cases, a method has been set up in SAFE to include siblings in single Social Summaries, Service Plans, and Progress Summaries. This simplifies writing these documents and makes court reports more acceptable in sibling cases. When completed correctly, all of the children's names appear on the documents, action items are completed for each child, the document is referenced in the Document Index for each child's case, and completion is noted in each child's Activity Record. However, there are some limits on this:

- Each of the children must be open as the primary on their own SCF case.
- Each sibling must be a “Child Client” on the case for the child under which the document is being written.
- All of the children must have been removed from home within the same 10-day period.

- The user must select all of the children to be in the Service Plan and Progress Summaries using the pop-up window that appears at the initiation of the *Social Summary*.
- The user must finalize the documents in this order, before starting the next one: *Social Summary, Service Plan, Progress Summary*.

Best Practice

A Snapshot Family-Centered Practice

Family-Centered Child Welfare Services

Conventional Child Welfare Services

Engagement

Families are engaged in ways relevant to the situation and sensitive to the values of their culture.

Efforts focus on getting the facts and gathering information and not in the building of relationships.

Assessment

The assessment protocols look at families' capabilities, strengths, and resources throughout the life of the case and are continuously assessed and discussed. Awareness of strengths supports the development of strategies built on competencies, assets, and resources.

The assessment focuses on the facts related to the reported abuse and neglect; the primary goal is to identify psychopathology of the "perpetrator."

Safety Planning

Families are involved in designing a safety plan based on information and support of worker/team members.

The plan is developed by Child Protective Services, courts, or lawyers without input from the family or from those that know the child.

Out-of-home placement

Partnerships are built between families and foster/adoptive families, or other placement providers. Respectful, non-judgmental, and non-blaming approaches are encouraged.

Biological, adoptive, and foster families have little contact with one another.

Implementation of service plan

Workers ensure that families have reasonable access to a flexible, affordable, individualized array of services and resources so that they can maintain themselves as a family.

Implementation most often consists of determining whether the family has complied with the case plan, rather than providing services and supports or coordinating with informal and formal resources.

Permanency Planning

Families, child welfare workers, community members, and service providers work together in developing alternate forms of permanency.

Alternative permanency plans are introduced only after efforts at parental rehabilitation are unsuccessful.

Re-evaluation of service plan

Information from the family, children, support teams, and service providers is continuously shared with the service system to ensure that intervention strategies can be modified as needed to support positive outcomes.

Few efforts are dedicated to determining the progress of the family in reaching the plan's outcomes. Re-evaluation results are not shared with the families.